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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8929
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0049

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 002212

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PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDUP: HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS FACE
REPRISALS, ARREST UPDATES

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 2064 B) DAMASCUS 1297

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4(b)/(d)
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11. (C) HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS FACE REPRISALS: SARG scrutiny of civil society activists has now expanded to include human rights lawyers. Anwar al-Bunni told Poloff May 11 that the Syrian Bar Association has formally suspended him for one year on charges stemming from the 2001 Damascus Spring trials. The decision follows five years of appeals by Bunni against the suspension, which stems from Bunni's statements to the press during the 2001 Damascus Spring trials of Riad Seif and Aref Dalila, as well as verbal arguments between Bunni and Supreme State Security Court judge Faisal an-Nouri. The Bar Association also informed lawyer and former Damascus Spring detainee Habib Issa that his law license has been suspended for the next three years. Bunni added that he had been personally interrogated for three hours by Fuad Nassif Kheirbek, the director of the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) State Security Internal Branch (Branch 251), earlier this week. (NOTE: Bunni characterized this as a departure from SARG's security's normal at-home visits with Bunni and the first time he has been interviewed by Kheirbek during the continuing spring 2006 crackdown.) Kheirbek told Bunni he must do more to fight against Islamists; Bunni retorted that for such action to be possible, the SARG must first give secular activists as much space to operate as they have given Islamists.

12. (C) Meanwhile, Kurdish humanrights lawyer and post contact Faisal Badr reported to Poloff that he has encountered increasing problems with Nouri during SSSC hearings. Badr noted (and Bunni confirmed) to Poloff May 9 that Nouri had sentenced one of Badr's clients to an extra six months in prison because Badr was his lawyer. The SSSC clerk also refused to register Badr as the defense lawyer for a pending SSSC case on May 7. Badr also reported that the families of ten of his Hama-based clients had been warned by security agents to change lawyers for the sake of their imprisoned family members. Based on these recent events, Badr fears that he will be banned from working at the SSSC, as Nouri has already done with Bunni and fellow lawyer Rezan Zeituneh.

13. (C) ARREST UPDATES: The chief of the Communist Action Party, opposition activist Fateh Jammous, remains in custody following his arrest at the Damascus airport on April 30 (ref A), after having reportedly met with external opposition groups during his two-month trip to Europe. According to Bunni, Jammous is thought to be in GID State Security Internal Branch custody. Meanwhile, an estimated 100-150 Kurds remain in custody in Aleppo, where they were arrested after participating in a peaceful candlelight march marking

the Kurdish New Year on March 20 (ref B). It is unclear which security branch is responsible for the Kurds' detention or if they will face prosecution.

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